

GOLDEN



AGE # 3

"SCENES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE"

From U.S. JONES #1



The GOLDEN AGE

"TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION." There has been a long and loud cry from fandom for more 'quality article-zines' in the tradition of ALTER EGO. But the question in my mind is whether or not fandom is really willing to support a regularly published "quality article-zine." I am sure that most fans will agree that this 3rd issue of THE GOLDEN AGE certainly fits into the above category. And, obviously, fanzines of this type are much more expensive to print, and since they carry no paid advertising, all revenues must come from the sale of the book. It is an odd thing, that while most critical letters I receive complain about the lack of non-ad material in the RB&CC, and yet the RB&CC has by far the largest circulation of any article zine published by the SFCA or any one else. While the total circulation of THE ROCKETS BLAST SPECIAL #1 is now over 2,750, it has taken nearly 3½ years to move out that many. I do not mind publishing fanzines (other than the RB&CC) and holding them for a period of years in order to get my money back out of them. But there has to be a limit to how many I could this with. This is the major reason that the SFCA has been hesitant to publish too many zines. It is not a question of whether or not we will sell the magazines, but a question of how long it will take. Nothing would please us more than to be able to publish the GOLDEN AGE two or three times a year. We already have enough material for another issue, and with artists like John Fantucchio, Don Newton, Dick Mosso, etc., (who have expressed their willingness to contribute the finest artwork around), we feel the GOLDEN AGE can be as good as any fanzine published. If the initial circulation (by that we mean the number of copies sold within 2 or three months of publication) of THE GOLDEN AGE were 500 to 600, that would allow us to recoup a large portion of our investment, and then we could afford to go ahead and publish more issues of it. So it is up to you whether or not THE GOLDEN AGE continues. Your support is most vital. Obviously, the first thing is to buy a copy but just as important is for you to urge other people you come in contact with (either by letter or in person) to support it, that is if you feel it deserves it.

So, it's up to you.

THE EDITOR

THE GOLDEN AGE NO. 3, 1968, is published by THE SFCA, 9875 SW 212 St., Miami, Fla. 33157. Contributors: Don Newton, Tom Fagan, Raymond Miller, Howard Siegel, Phil Robbie, and Wayne Boglitsch. Editor = G.B. Love
\$1.50 per copy. Jim Jones



THE 41 BATTLES OF HARVEY KURTZMAN

BY TOM FAGAN



BAROOOM!

DEAR ED,
IN THE LAST
ISSUE I
FOUNDA
MISTA
Awar

Do you
see no
art by
any one

I am alone
in art
and I am
big in
the
world
to be
the
best

Why don't
you
to me

Dear
Ed
I am
a
fan

Dear Editor,
I am a
fan and
love
your
magazine
J.

BRACKABRAK-
BRACKA

NEWTON

THE 41 BATTLES OF HARVEY KURTZMAN

Letter Pages sell comics! In truth, they're probably one of the closest-read section of any comic book. Evidence of their popularity is they're still around nearly a quarter of a century after the first regularly run letter page appeared in DAREDEVIL COMICS of the Lev-Gleason-Charles Biro stable. But there is more to be found in letter columns than the clever, not-so-clever, complaining, praising comments of one's own thinking or that of friends. A discerning reader can glean a good deal from a letter page. Answers tend to reveal the philosophy of a company or the whim or review of a particular editor.

Marvel replies to letters are witty, good-natured and reflect an attitude of "We take ourselves seriously when we have to." Mighty, on the other hand, proclaims its own virtues with verbal bellowing that sometimes makes a reader wonder. Charlton demonstrates its attitude of, "We're working to give readers what they want." And any reader of D.C., of course, is familiar with editorial penchant for "Favorite Guys" and "Big Sister" from Bethesda. Yet to this writer's knowledge, none of the historians in fandom to date have utilized the letter columns to tell the story of a magazine and its editor. Now is the time!

And the man is Harvey Kurtzman. And the magazines are TWO-FISTED TALES and FRONTLINE COMBAT.

Using notes from here and bits from there, a rather good composite picture of Kurtzman's personality emerges--or at least of his personality as it was then in the early 1950's. Some believe Kurtzman was at a zenith then, as now. Seeds were being sown, laying the foundation for the present-day, almost worship respect of "The Great God Kurtzman," as he is referred to in some circles.

To quote a detailed Kurtzman background here would be superfluous. So much on the subject has been written elsewhere. However, for the sake of clarity, here is an excerpt from the page headed "E.C. Artist of the Issue: Harvey Kurtzman," as it appeared in TWO FISTED TALES #28 (July-August 1952) and FRONTLINE COMBAT #6 (May-June 1952): "It was here at E.C. that Harvey was given his first opportunity to show what he could do in the way of the straight comic illustration. His superior work earned for him a permanent position on E.C.'s staff, and with his magnificent science-fiction stories in WEIRD SCIENCE and WEIRD FANTASY, Harvey quickly achieved great popularity with you readers. When E.C. decided to add an adventure mag to its line, Harvey was the logical choice for editor. And so TWO FISTED TALES was born. Instantly converting to a war magazine upon the advent of the Korean conflict, TWO FISTED TALES became a resounding success! FRONTLINE COMBAT soon followed. Harvey's editing, writing, covers and layouts brought a fresh, new approach to comics, and other publishers quickly began to copy (even trace, in many instances!) his unique presentation. But even the best of the imitations don't approach the Kurtzman style!"

These views, of course, were stated before Kurtzman was to edit MAD, appearing on the stands in August, 1952, to run for 28 issues under his guidance, and to become a national and international institution.

But no concern with that here. With a Bow Bada Bada Ba Da Badow!, or a Bada Bam, Bam, Bam!, or perhaps a Vrrrrrrrowww...return to the world of TWO FISTED TALES and FRONTLINE COMBAT. Here was a universe of high-pitched guttural sounds--battle cries of "Looks like its up to us!" "Fix Bayonets!" men dying in battle, cities rent by explosive missiles, children and animals, alike bewildered by war.

Scenes were Korea, Anzio, Iwo Jima, San Juan Hill, Kip's Bay, Chickamauga, the Alps of Hannibal's time and Great Britain of 43 AD. Stories were of the U.S. Army, Navy Air Force, Marines, U.N. Troops, Rough Riders, Indians, Western gunfighters, Union and Confederate soldiers, Romans -- to name a few.

The settings -- sea, air, land, muck of Korea, treacherous mountain trails, bottoms of oceans, insect-infested jungles -- anywhere and everywhere except outer space beyond the limits of jets.

There were no alien monsters in these magazines -- only people, good, and bad, living, breathing, fighting to stay alive, searching for hope or personal gain. And over all this presided the editorial judgement and the certainly competent if not superlative artistry of Harvey Kurtzman.

It's not so much the stories in these two magazines we're concerned with here. They were good in most cases, although as TWO FISTED TALES neared the end of its tenure they became hack material. What we are concerned with are the questions put to Kurtzman by readers, and, more importantly, his answers. Both TWO FISTED and FRONTLINE had letter columns, and there were also occasional editorials signed by Kurtzman.

Before you open TWO FISTED TALES #25, vintage January 1952, note the cover and see the tiny emblem which proclaims, "Conforms to the Comics Code." Note it, for you'll see it only once again, on issue #26, and then never again. There's a lot to be seen in "Combat Correspondence," the letter column title in TWO FISTED TALES as of #25.

About TWO FISTED itself, a reader saw that the magazine had begun with #18. "It was a change in title from a previous magazine published by E.C. which had run seventeen issues!" A reader wanted to know whether the stories in TWO FISTED are fiction or fact. Kurtzman answered: "Our stories...other than the historicals...are fiction. Nevertheless we go to great lengths to make our background material as accurate as possible." What these "lengths" were was a subject Kurtzman would fully describe only when he wrote the obituary notice for TWO FISTED TALES some three years later. According to ~~the~~ Kurtzman notes also in #25, readers were asking for "more stories on historical subjects." He was doubtful about this type of material, stating: "...We have found that 'educational' type comic mags have sold very poorly. Nevertheless, we have yet to try publishing a complete book of historical stories of the type that have been appearing in TWO FISTED TALES and FRONTLINE COMBAT." The Great Civil War issues were yet to come!

"Front Lines" was the appropriate title of the letter column in FRONTLINE COMBAT. In #5, a reader severely criticized the lack of a "real funny side" to the book. This writer -- a miss from Moosup, Connecticut -- declared, "Perhaps YOUR minds can take those gruesome picture stories you print but a good many people need a cheerful tonic of joy to help them. Hoping you will discard your present 'funny' books and print far better ones..."

Kurtzman devoted the greater part of the column to answering this letter. His answer, in part, reveals the serious side of the man so many know only for his satire. Replied Kurtzman, "There is certainly a definite need for humor in the world today. BUT THERE IS A NEED FOR MANY OTHER THINGS AS WELL! There is a need for people to realize the utter horror and futility of war. And this we try to sock to our readers in FRONTLINE COMBAT. Our mags are called 'comic' books. But we are no more bound to be comical than a shoe tree is bound to grow leaves! Our business is entertainment...but we in no way owe allegiance to humor....We get satisfaction from the knowledge that our readers enjoy our mags and in hoping that we might have passed along some ideas for them to ponder over!"

TWO FISTED #26 was "A Document of the Action at Changjin Reservoir." This 'special issue' depicted the action in Korea in December, 1950, with four sharply-detailed, realistic stories. "Combat Correspondence" for that issue included a searching question from a Detroit reader:

"After reading your magazine, I realized what war meant. A terrible waste of human life inflicted on both sides. When will the civilized world learn to settle their differences by peaceful methods?" Kurtzman didn't employ phony platitudes in his answer. Instead, he said quite truthfully, "A good question... We can't answer it, so we pass it along to our readers."

The absence of a "real funny side" was getting across to the readers. #27 carried several comments from readers on Kurtzman's use of non-happy endings in his magazines...something quite unusual in any mass medium, especially comic books. Said an Army Private, "I think it's great to show that war is actually hell and it shouldn't be presented as anything else but just that." Another reader told Kurtzman to "keep those sad endings, because when I finish them, it makes me sit up and think!" To the latter statement, Kurtzman replied, "That's exactly what we're trying to do...make you think." Could there be a finer objective for an editor? Kurtzman, in this issue, also expressed his view on what war is and when to stop it. He declared, "War is like a tiny snowball rolling down a hill, picking up thousands of flakes. Soon the snowball achieves the size and momentum of an avalanche...and then it's too late to stop it. The time to prevent a war is when it's still a little snowball."

Gerry McLaughlin of Springfield, Vermont, commented on Kurtzman's realistic approach to war stories in a letter published in TWO FISTED #28, July-August 1952. Wrote McLaughlin, "I've just finished reading your account of the retreat from the Changjin Reservoir. Having followed the action closely by reading the newspapers, I can honestly say that your account was quite accurate!" Other readers expressed enthusiasm about such detailed accounts, and this prompted Kurtzman to write: "We've taken the plunge and followed up with another special issue (FRONTLINE COMBAT #7) on Iwo Jima!"

But all was not praise in the letter column of #28. One reader asked why American soldiers were never depicted as having committed atrocities, commenting as follows: "I believe that the American soldier is not all clean, like you see in the papers." "To this touchy question, Kurtzman replied with an honest and non-sugarcoated answer: "Sure, we've got rotten apples in our barrel...Americans commit atrocities too! But at least our government and our constitution condemn such practices, which is a lot more than can be said for some other governments!" This is pretty straight-from-the-shoulder talk from a "comic" magazine editor.

Kurtzman realized full well that the comic-book format had its limitations. Consider this letter in TWO FISTED #29, Sept.-Oct. 1952. Two stories of Korea were featured in this issue, but even more thought provoking was a letter written from that battlefield. "Name Withheld" wrote, I have one suggestion to

make!" "See if you can show some of the monotony and boredom that also accompanies war. These two items belong strictly to the rear echelon troops -- you know, the lucky ones who can get a decent liberty once in awhile. I belong to that group. Had a buddy that volunteered for frontline areas because he didn't hear from his wife for periods of two or three weeks. (This is not an infrequent occurrence.) He was not one of the lucky ones. He will stay in Korea until the graves registration moves him." Kurtzman admitted, "It is difficult, if not impossible, to get across an accurate picture of a G.I.'s life in Korea. Letters like this say more than we could in a thousand comic books!"

On a lighter side, a reader declared, "The things I like the most is the words you put down for gunshots and explosions. The ones I like best are POW, K-BLAM, KRACK, WHOOM, BLOOM." Kurtzman's comment: "How could you forget WHOMP, BLOUW, and THOK?"

Also in TWO FISTED #29, an announcement revealed that FRONTLINE COMBAT #9 would be the first all-Civil War issue, "on sale about the middle of July...and a real collector's item!" Dimes in hand, E.C. fans scrambled to pick up that issue. It was as promised -- all Civil War from cover to cover. A flip to the letter column and we saw that Kurtzman had a plan, namely, "Every few months E.C. will publish another section of the Civil War...the second special issue will be TWO FISTED TALES #31, on sale in October. The complete set will cover the Civil War from beginning to end." A series of seven issues was planned. Both TWO FISTED and FRONTLINE folded before the series was completed.

FRONTLINE #9 contained perhaps the strangest letter (considering Kurtzman was the magazine's editor) in either of the war-adventure mags. In it, a San Jose, Californian stated bluntly, "I think you should let someone besides Harvey Kurtzman draw your covers." Straight to the point, Kurtzman answered, "Good news...Starting with TWO FISTED TALES #30, we're going to feature covers by Jack Davis, and Severin and Elder, as well as by H. Kurtzman!"

Another reader requested a story "about some negro G.I.s..." Such a story, "Bunker," about negro troops in Korea, would be featured in TWO FISTED TALES #31, Kurtzman promised.

William M. Gaines, E.C.'s managing editor, had a historic announcement to make in FRONTLINE #9: "E.C. is preparing for publication in late July a new magazine...the tenth title to be added to the E.C. line!...THE BLASTED MAG IS ACTUALLY GONNA BE A 'COMIC' COMIC! The writer-editor for this new E.C. rib-tickling baby is your own HARVEY KURTZMAN...who, long before achieving prominence in the comic field for his editing and writing of E.C.'s war mags, was a first-rate humor cartoonist!" If you haven't guessed it by now, Gaines was telling his readers to get ready to pick up the first issue of MAD. A new era was about to begin in the comics industry, with Kurtzman in the forefront.

Meanwhile, TWO-FISTED #31 came out as the second Civil War issue. Kurtzman reported that letters on the Civil War series "are coming in at a good rate. It's interesting to note that the letters from the north feel we aren't giving enough credit to the Yanks, and letters from the South feel we aren't giving the Rebels enough attention!" The Civil War was about to be fought all over again in a barrage of opinionated letters in both magazines' letter columns.

Troubles in the comics industry were spoken of in TWO FISTED #32, March-April 1953. There were no letters from the readers here. Instead, there was an unsigned editorial message (probably written by Gaines) asking for staunch reader support to carry E.C. through a troubled period. In part, the lengthy editorial said: "Every few years, the comic industry 'collapses'. The last big collapse was in 1950--we at E.C. completely revised our line, and started from scratch with our 'new trend' comics...We have prospered, grown, and now publish 10 bi-monthlies! We were highly successful in horror, science fiction, and then in war comics. Our success led to other publishers loading the stands with their horror, s-f, and war comics, loading the stands to the extent that in September, 1952, there were over 500 different comic mags being published! Last March the comic industry began to collapse again under the weight of this impossible number of titles. At this writing (early October), the field is filled with rumors of publisher after publisher either going out of business or dropping titles. 'E.C. is standing firm, and we are continuing to publish all ten magazines...KEEP BUYING E.C. MAGAZINES...'"

Worse, Dr. Frederic Wertham was about to swing a mighty--and perhaps misguided--ax. But on the pleasant side of the ledger, TWO FISTED #32, announced the return of artist Johnny Craig to E.C., and the acquisition of work by Joe (Hawkman) Kubert. (The latter artist didn't stay long.)

In its 33rd issue it became necessary to placate the letter-writers in the now raging North-South battle. Kurtzman declared that E.C. was trying to walk "a neutral path" in the Civil War issues. "Our two main sets of reference," he said, "--universally accepted as the most accurate and authoritative--are THE PICTURE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL WAR (10 volumes) and BATTLES AND LEADERS (4 volumes) -- both sets unfortunately containing a larger proportion of history from the Northern viewpoint. As a result, we find our stories tend to be seen through the eyes of the North. We'd appreciate any suggestions leading to more material concerning Southern war history."

One reader commented, "I see that you've printed a map taken from Fletcher Pratt's ORDEAL BY FIRE." True enough, Kurtzman answered, "Not only have we used Fletcher Pratt's map...we've used Fletcher Pratt! Indeed, our whole Civil War series has been outlined under the direction and guidance of Mr. Pratt, eminent Civil War historian."

FRONTLINE #12 (May-June 1953) was an all "Air Force Issue." On the last page a poster exclaimed, "The U.S. Air Force Needs Your Help!" Readers were asked to join the Ground Observers Corp as "air spotters for the Air Force." There was quite a response -- FRONTLINE #14 declared, "At the last count, the Air Force in Washington reported 8,000 letters from readers with more letters still coming in."

Yellow Jaundice knocked TWO FISTED TALES #34 for a loop. The July-August 1953 issue featured a message from William Gaines: "TWO FISTED's brilliant writer-artist-editor, who generally masterminds the mag from cover to cover...suddenly developed a serious case of yellow jaundice and was quickly retired to a hospital bed!" According to Gaines managed to write one story for the issue "while the nurse wasn't looking." The others were written either by the artists themselves or by "assistant editor Jerry Dee" (read Jerry DeFuccio, now a MAD editorial associate). Kurtzman recovered from the jaundice bout but the fact that three of the four stories in TWO FISTED #34 were non-Kurtzman jobs was to have an effect on the magazine's future.

The end was in sight for both TWO FISTED TALES and FRONTLINE COMBAT. Another Civil War issue made TWO FISTED #35 (October 1953) memorable. Even more memorable was Gaines' announcement that both magazines were now quarterlies. Gaines explained that Kurtzman, though out of the hospital, "Has not yet recovered from the siege of yellow jaundice that hospitalized him for several months, and is unable to write and edit six issues of FRONTLINE, six issues of TWO FISTED, and six issues of MAD per year without compromising with his high standards of quality. The tremendous amount of research required to turn out an issue of FRONTLINE or TWO FISTED is both exhausting and inconceivably time-consuming." This note from Gaines makes the imagination stagger, thinking of Kurtzman's tremendous output of ideas for E.C. Gaines also noted it took considerably less time to write a story for MAD, so it was agreed that "the cut should be made in the war mags. This will lighten Harvey's burden to 14 issues annually."

Accordingly, FRONTLINE also went quarterly with #14, dated October, 1953. The issue contained the same editorial message from Gaines spoken of above.

FRONTLINE #15 contained no editorial message from Kurtzman, but Gaines was again represented. In this January, 1954 issue he informed readers that "...all the stories have been WRITTEN as well as drawn by the artists. As suggested previously we've been trying to take some of the work off the shoulders of 'slowly-but-surely recovering' writer-editor Harvey Kurtzman. We think you'll like the stories in this issue, and as always, we welcome your comments." (The artists in #15 were Wood, Evans, Davis, and Severin.)

Readers couldn't have had much of a chance to comment on #15. The stage had been set for things to come. In bold black outline there appeared an "obituary" notice in TWO FISTED TALES #36 (January, 1954). Or was it that the TWO FISTED TALES readers had known for so many months? There was something different. The cover logo now read: THE NEW TWO FISTED TALES. Inside was the shocking, black-bordered message. The title read, "IN MEMORIAM." Below it, "FRONTLINE COMBAT... killed in action. FRONTLINE is dead, unhappily killed by the very happy ending of hostilities in Korea." There followed Kurtzman's explanation for the announcement, and an inkling of the pains that had been taken to insure accuracy in both of the "old magazines". It bears repeating... "FRONTLINE is dead and TWO FISTED has changed its format! Here's why! For the past two and one-half years, we have traveled to Army, Navy, and Air Force bases...gone down in submarines and up in airplanes...and combed the consulates, libraries, and museums in order to bring you TWO FISTED TALES and FRONTLINE COMBAT. We have put forth our best efforts to give you magazines that we believed were entertaining and informative. However, our best has not been enough. After a successful run, and towards the end of the Korean conflict, our circulation began to sag...finally reaching the point where our expenses far exceeded our income. And so, with a truce in Korea, we've regretfully decided that it's time for the end of the war mags. We've decided to turn down the flame on TWO FISTED TALES, and to snuff out FRONTLINE COMBAT. THE NEW TWO FISTED TALES will come out, initially, four times a year. It will be basically an adventure magazine...a little emphasis on war...a big emphasis on the old west, history, and tales of high adventure...with a completely new approach that we're sure will fascinate you. We shall also continue our special Civil War issues...release dates to be announced later. Needless to say your letters will help direct our NEW TWO FISTED TALES toward the success we are hoping for, so write and tell us what you think! -- Harvey Kurtzman, Editor."

Whereas the stories before may have been "fictional", they had never featured

main characters who would go adventuring issue after issue. Beginning with #36 THE NEW TWO FISTED TALES had two such characters: Jack Slaughter, a western gunfighter, and E.J. "Ruby Ed" Coffey, "one of the world's richest men...a quarter century ago."

Ruby Ed and Black Jack were back again in April 1954's #37. Severin's name was on each story, as well as on the cover. The letter column, which had been absent for two issues, returned under a new title: "Two Fisted Talk". There were the usual letters of congratulations on "your change to adventure." But one reader echoed the sentiments of much of Kurtzman's hard-core fandom when he stated, "This new magazine is too radical a departure for me to like it."

Nevertheless, #38 (July 1954) hit the stands with yet another main character besides Ruby Ed and Black Jack. Readers were told to meet "Cheyenne Hawk again in the next issue." Again, Severin's name was on the cover as well as the four stories within. Why Severin all the time? #38's "Two Fisted Talk" gave the explanation... "THE NEW TWO FISTED TALES is an experiment. We liked the look of an all-Severin book and we feel that there are many of you out there who feel the same. We hope we are right."

The 'experiment' -- perhaps noble but more likely intended solely to boost circulation and make more money -- failed. Witness #s 40 and 41. "THE NEW" was dropped from the title. The artists were Severin, Davis, Evans, Wood, and Krigstein. The mag was once again designated a bimonthly. Running characters were dropped entirely. But again there was the inscription on the inside front cover -- "IN MEMORIAM." Beneath this were the written feelings of an Editor. "This will be the last issue of TWO FISTED TALES. It is with sincere regret that we make this announcement, but as many of you have probably noticed, our efforts to sustain what we felt was a quality magazine have floundered and finally collapsed under the pressure of having to compete with the more 'stimulating' type of comic book. The passing of TWO FISTED TALES is the passing of an era for us at E.C. We just hope that you, our fans, received as much pleasure reading TWO FISTED TALES as we received producing it over these past three years. Not that doing TWO FISTED TALES has been without headaches; we have had our share. However, we cannot help but look back with nostalgia upon our experiences in connection with TWO FISTED TALES; our sessions at the New York Public Library (a treasure-house of rare old history books), where we relived the wars of the past. We have sprung the catapults with the army of Caesar... wielded the glaive and the bill-hook at Agincourt... touched fuse to harquebus with Cortez... and primed and loaded the flintlock with General George Washington at Pell's Point. We charged into the Valley of Death with the Light Brigade... we saw the Mexicans massacred by the Mexicans at the Alamo... saw the first shot lobbed from a mortar into Fort Sumter... followed Teddy Roosevelt, his Rough Riders and his Gatling Guns up San Juan Hill and flew in Baron Von Richtofen's blood-red Fokker over the valley of the Somme.

Then of course there were the unforgettable trips to the Army, Navy, and Air Force with whose cooperation we rode a Sherman tank, went under the water in a submarine, and flew inside an SA-16 rescue plane, to mention a few of our experiences. We could fill a book with the names of the people who helped us with TWO FISTED TALES... soldiers, sailors, airmen... heroes from the Korean War... jet-aces... veterans.

To the hundreds of people in the armed forces, in the airplane plants, in the libraries and collections, who were all so helpful to us, we owe a great debt of gratitude. To the hundreds of thousands of readers who bought and read our magazines, we also owe a debt of gratitude.

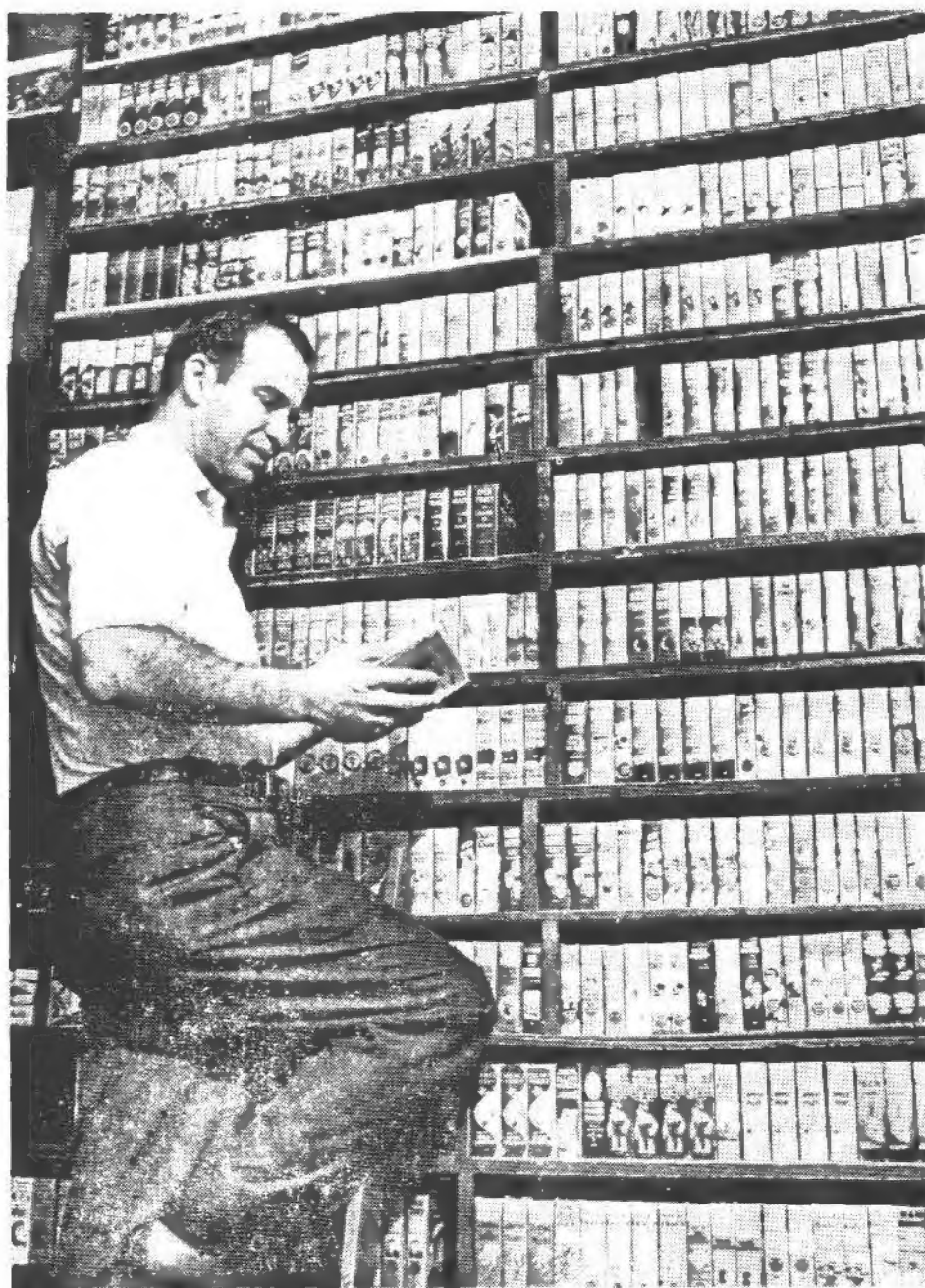
Perhaps in the future, TWO FISTED TALES or a TWO FISTED TALES type magazine will be revived. We profoundly hope so. Until such times we relax the arms, unloosen the fingers of our TWO FISTED TALES, and we stretch the open hands toward new, and we hope more successful, fields of endeavor. -- Harvey Kurtzman, Editor."

THE END

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Whereas this article dealt mainly with Harvey Kurtzman and the letter columns of TWO FISTED TALES and FRONTLINE COMBAT, a future article in a future issue of THE GOLDEN AGE by John Stanley on war comics. This will deal with the two EC war comics themselves, along with a comparison of the present war comics with the E.C. type. This will be a long, in-depth article, which all E.C. fans can look forward to.

Big Little Books Growing in Eyes of Collectors



Collecting **Big Little Books** is the hobby of Dale Manesis, a Milwaukee ac-

countant. He has more than 1,200 on shelves in his hobby room.

By MARGO HUSTON
of The Journal Staff

Try jogging your memory
with this name game

Who were Baby Dumpling,
Dan Dunn, Kiler Kane, Buck
Rogers and Roughhouse? If
you can identify them, you've
probably read a heap of Big
Little Books.

In the 1930s these chubby
(424 pages) minibooks (3½
by 4½ inches) saturated
young imaginations just as
TV does the edays. Between
their hard covers thrived the
likes of Little Orphan Annie,
Blondie, Dick Tracy, Flash
Gordon and Wimpy.

Blanketed Nation

In the forties, Big Little
Books were upstaged by their
own offspring — comic
books. During their brief life
span, these ingenious prod-
ucts of Whitman Publishing
Co. in Racine blanketed the
nation. Kids from Cape Cod
to Capistrano paid a dime or
swapped with a friend to get
another of the 562 titles.

James B. Lyle, now presi-
dent of Whitman, worked on
the first Big Little Book. "We
took the actual comic strips
that were printed in the
newspaper, except we
blanked out the balloon and
filled in that area. The cap-
tion below the picture was
basically what had appeared

in the balloon. That carried
the story."

The Big Little Book format
was simple: A frame of a
comic strip on the right page
and 13 lines of text, in large
print, on the left. During
their zenith, more than a mil-
lion copies a month were
sold.

The popularity of Big Little

Books is once again on the
upswing. Some of the folk
who helped initiate the craze
years ago now pay as much
as 60 times the original sell-
ing price for coveted copies.

As collectors' items, the
books are retrieved from
dusty attics and swapped by
hobbyists wishing to amass a
complete set. They are con-

sidered camp and have cer-
tain monetary value; howev-
er, their appeal is mainly nos-
talgic — as innocent as
yearning for mom's home-
made rhubarb pie.

The 1968 value of the
books is disputed, although
the title and condition of
each book helps establish its
value. A complete set, in A-1
condition, was purchased re-
cently by the University of
Minnesota for \$3,200.

Spends Many Hours

One Milwaukeean who
should know the answers to
the name game is Dale Mane-
sis, 36, an accountant. Mane-
sis, a collector of Big Little
Books for 18 years, has
more than 1,200 volumes
stacked 18 shelves high in the
hobby room of his house at
2002 N. 49th st. He has de-
voted between 20 and 40
hours a week to his hobby
during the last five years and
believes "it's one of the best
personal Big Little Book
collections in the country."

For those of you who are
too young, too old or too for-
getful to identify all five Big
Little Book characters, here
are the answers.

Baby Dumpling was the
nickname for that preco-
cious, overconfident and
mostly mischievous first-
born of Blondie and Dag-
wood. His real name was Al-
exander and he'd say things
like, "I'm awful smart, dad-

dy," or "I'm going to dye Dai-
sy red, daddy."

You remember Daisy, that
flappy eared pup.

Today's heroes are Agent
99 and Agent 007. The thir-
ties had Dan Dunn, Secret
Operative 48. Naturally
square jawed, this detective
battled crime with the help
of his derby hatted aid. He
took on the big time gang-
sters — counterfeiters, smug-
glers, dope peddlers and their
ilk.

In Buck Rogers there was
the good and the bad, and
Kiler Kane, with his wicked
girl friend, Ardala, were the
perennial villains. The name
Buck Rogers, in its day, was
synonymous with futuristic
inventions like, well, they
called them rocket ships
then.

Only the connoisseur of

Big Little Books could be ex-
pected to recall Roughhouse.
He was the big lout with the
chef's hat who fixed Wimpy
his hamburgers. And there
was only one "Wimpy the
Hamburger Eater" Big Little
Book published.

Manesis says he enjoys re-
reading his volumes. But lo-
cating certain issues is pains-
taking. However, for Mane-
sis the searching has "the
thrill of a big game hunt."

Speaking from an inner-
city father's point of view, Mane-
sis says the old books are
"good, solid reading enter-
tainment — something that
wouldn't warp the values of
children like some of the
stuff on TV and on the news-
stands today."

His children, Nicholas, 9,
and Danny, 8, collect comic
books. Like their father, they,
too, can buy Big Little Books
new at the stores because

this year Whitman has issued
a fresh series of the same
genre.

Inflation has necessitated a
higher price for the new Big
Little Books. They sell for
39c. But Whitman's president
notes another difference.
"They contain more blood
and thunder," says Lyle. It's
true. Volumes have been
adapted from the TV series
"The Man From UNCLE" and
"The Invaders."

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1978 - A SATIRE ?

January 10th : National Academy of Comic Arts & Sciences make annual presentation of their Disney statuettes. This years winners :

For the best technical work : Jerry Bails for his Encyclopedia of Statistical Data and Reference Index of the Justice League of America.

For the best letter sent to a magazine : Roy Thomas, Jr. for a letter criticizing a story written by Roy Thomas, Sr. in issue #213 of Sons of the Fantastic Four.

For the best non-professional publication : G.B. Love for Fandom Annual #11, a 125 page, full color treatment of the best articles appearing in the first 100 issues of RBCC.

The Stan Lee Award, given to the man who did the most in advancing the comic art as a recognized american cultural heritage : For the 5th straight year the award went to Stan Lee.

February 5th : At an auction sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in N.Y.C., a private collection brought piecemeal record prices. For example, Action #1 - \$450.00, Detective #17 - \$425.00, Fantastic Four #1 - \$400.00, Showcase #17 - \$100.00 (experts agree that the last book commanded such a high price because of the successful landing and return of our Mars Exploration Force).

March 12th : National Periodicals revives The Flash. Can this be the beginning of a new era for costumed heroes ?

April 2nd : Success of The Flash revival prompts DC to reissue The Atom (a full size hero stranded on a world of giants), The Green Lantern (clad in a yellow costume, with green chest emblem, and a magical

ring made of wood. The only weakness this hero has is that he is unable to travel through space because the Van Allen radiation belt effects the power of his ring) and the Bwana Beast (high hopes is given to the latter by management at DC as their sales charts indicate big money can be made by licensing this character for TV and merchandise gimics. Already Bwana Beast spears, Bwana Beast piggy banks, and Bwana Beast sneakers are on the market. Can we expect the next 97 issues of Brave and Bold to feature a teamup of Bwana Beast and the DC stable of soldiers, sailors, marines, air force aces, cowboys, detectives, ghost sleuths, etc. ?)

May 16th : Marvel Comics purchased by General Mills. Every box of cereal to have a picture of the Marvel Super Heroes on it. Holdovers from the second Heroic Age will start the program, beginning with the son of Reed Richards and Sue Storm, to be followed by Bucky, who in 1969 was found by Submariner at the bottom of the Artic Ocean. His body was perfectly preserved in a state of nil-animation inside the fusilage of a World War II robot bomb encased in jellied Cosmolene. (A very original concept). Marvel fans are still, to this day, protesting the editorial descision to have Bucky revive in time to see Captain America die in the destruction of S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters while saving Nick Fury.

June 3rd : Archie Comics reviving their super hero line. They enter the market with such winners as Zambini the Magician, Rang-A-Tang the Wonder Dog, and Sgt. Boyle from the 1940's. They feel that characters such as Steel Sterling, The Shield, and Capt. Flag would not do too well. Chief Editor of the

publishing house has hired the same team of writers and artists that made a shambles of Radio-Mighty Comics in the 1960's. Early issues of The Fly and Shadow are still selling for 50¢ each at current listed prices.

July 25th : At the Winston-Salem, N.C. ComicCon for 1977, guest speaker Frederic Wertham III maintained that his grandfather spent his last days reading back issues of Wonder Woman, Batman, Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, EC publications, and Little Annie Fanny. He passed away peacefully with a sigh of contentment, a smile on his face, and in whispered tones, said, "Feiffer was right !"

August 14th : DC drops The Flash. Claim low sales have prompted this decision. Only 750,000 copies of the first, and 740,000 of the second issue were sold. "How can we afford to revive super heroes if such low sales figures as these can be expected ?" Company signs million dollar contract with CBS for prime time programming of Bwana Beast. 'In this day and age you cannot rub big business the wrong way by ceding to the wishes of a few million comic collectors who put artistic achievement first !" stated National Periodical's treasurer. Carmine Infantino committed to a rest home with a broken heart.

September 8th : Marvel buys eight characters from DC and plans to update them. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby announce full scale program to stimulate interest in new versions of Brother Power, the Super Geek, Forbush Man and the Inferior Five, Stanley and the Monster Hulk, and The Sea Devils starring Namor. Superman celebrates 1000th issue, Batman 985th, Orphan Annie is still 11 years old. None have aged.

October 11th : Simon & Kirby reunite! First production will be a patriotic team. Inside information reports it will be a grouping of Capt. America, Pvt. Strong and Fighting American. Kirby will pencil all the stars and stripes, Simon will ink them. First issue slated for December as a \$1 annual. Already collectors have reserved 1,250,000 copies from news stands. Issue has current market value of \$9.00. Ads in RB CC reveal package sales of this magazine with any 24 Marvels from the last 3 years for \$9.50. One dealer will sell new S&K magazine with 3 Dr. Strange from 1970, 2 Ghost Riders from 1967, Fantasy Masterpieces #2 and Millie the Model 1977 Annual from stock for \$11.00!

November 20th : Demolition of Eastern Color & Printing Co. plant in new england. Wreckers discover hidden store room in subceller containing 100,000 copies of comics from 1957-1969. Fans and collectors go wild. Dept. of Health, Education & Welfare declares property as public domain and creates a national lottery with all proceeds used for govt. grants to art schools. Critic for the N.Y. Times has this to say of the discovery : "The art of such as Wood, Williamson, Crandall, Foster, Frazetta and Raymond is far inferior by today's standards. The stories of Fox, Thomas, Lee, Broome and Schwartz is not as good as some of today's scripters." N.Y. Times critic pelted with rotten fruit by Jean Bails, Mary Fantucchio, Irene Vartanoff and Jean Thomas as he leaves the Times Building. Bail for this gallant foursome paid for by Lee, Fox, Frazetta, Williamson, Crandall and Broome. Harold Stassen, proclaiming himself "in" as a candidate for president in the upcoming elections will base his

campaign into the need for a Comics Code Authority. Political experts claim he is somewhat behind the times.

December 26th : National Periodicals get a belated Xmas present. Bwana Beast is cancelled on TV because of poor ratings. DC sues the Neilson people. Will Eisner, disgusted with the whole situation, announces he is coming out of retirement and will revive the Spirit. Stan Lee proclaims that the third Marvel Golden Age is a complete success. The year ends on a sane note.....

HOWARD P. SIEGEL

" SCENES FROM THE GOLDEN AGE "

From STAR SPANGLED COMICS #25



Comic Books Neither Forgotten Nor Gone

By LLOYD BROWN
Journal Staff Writer

Whatever happened to comic books?

Most adults in the 30- and 40-year category can remember the pre-television days, roughly before 1950, when comic books accurately mirrored juvenile culture.

Now, when the Saturday television show has a stranglehold on the minds and imaginations of the nation's youngsters, comic books may seem like products of a forgotten era.

Good news: They are still on the news stands.

The Journal revisited comic books this week. It was a timely visit, for this week the news stands are featuring the 10th anniversary issue of Superman — one of the original super heroes of the late 30's and the one that probably did the most for the industry.

They were all there: Lois Lane, Perry White, Luthor and Mr. Mxyzptlk.

Since the Space Age began, comic book writers have no doubt been hard pressed to come up with possibly unbelievable adventures. The effort of the new issue is "Superman From Outer Space."

In it, Superman's super powers are as strong as ever and naturally he triumphs in the end. In another story, he apparently weds his girlfriend, Miss Lane.

Batman, who recently en-

JOHN. BENEATH THE FURY OF HIS PUNISHMENT, THE ENEMY WANTED REVENGE. HE KNEW HE COULD GET IT. HE PAPER.



Supermen Still Prevail

... But They're Getting Much More Expensive

NEW YORK — Comic books that once sold for 10 cents each now are selling for up to \$150 at the first International Convention of Comic Art here, which ends tomorrow.

In attendance since Thursday have been editors, cartoonists, middle-aged sentimentalists, but mostly teen-agers.

Howard Rogofsky, 21, said he sold a 1939 first edition Marvel Mystery for \$330.

Glenn Farey, 15, said, "I like to read old comic books. You get to know what people liked, what they said then."

Some critics contend that current comic books encourage violence. R. Stan Lee, an editor and writer of comics, conceded. "It's like saying that Jack in the Beanstalk has a lot of violence."

enjoyed a brief comeback on television and in the movies, a star still around. In the latest issue he is apparently married. Television doesn't have a monopoly on violence.

Donald Duck appearing in "Walt Disney Comics" stars in a reprinted story that is about 17 years old, but still funny.

Mickey Mouse is in there too.

In another comic, Sub-Mariner, who battled evil Axis forces during World War II, carries on his fight. His latest enemy is a non-political foe called "Tiger Shark."

Happily the same old ads appear. Charles Atlas is still peddling healthy he-man bod-

ies and you can buy live chameleons, spy cameras and magic tricks from the ad pages.

Archie, the eternal teenager who also appears in the Journal, is still torn between Betty and Veronica. They keep pace with the times by wearing miniskirts.

Over in the horror corner, we have "The Unexpected" magazine featuring Johnny Peri in "Journey Into Nightmare." Practically guaranteed to frighten the bejabbers out of some little tyke, unless he's been exposed to "Outer Limits" and "Twilight Zone" on television.

"Teen Confessions" and "Young Romance" remain about the same, except that they are funnier than ever. The cover of a current one shows a young lady torn between a Joe College-type and a flower-bedecked hippie.

Another maiden wonders in her thought balloon while being kissed by a Latin lover, "Which kiss will be our last? Which one will break my heart?"

One type of comic book has not moved ahead. World War II is still being fought heatedly, not being an "unpopular war" like the current one.

Modern times have brought forth new comic book heroes based on television. "Lost in Space" comics features a family in that predicament, not however, the familiar faces that are on TV weekly.

There were those, of course, who claimed that comic books warped young minds 20 years ago, just as some today say television will ruin them.

They may have a case, con-



Some Emphasize Romance

sideting some books that get to the newsstands, but in general local stands feature unproved comics with heroes whose antics have brought glee and amazement for years.

Comic books are actually a collection of comic strips — strips being one form of the "seven lively arts," according to one college-level American history book. Strips date back to 1889.

Comic strips received their share of criticism too, like one declaration, in 1906, that "Whatever merits the comic supplements may have pos-

sessed in the beginning, when their creators were artists of original methods, distinctive style and freshness and gentility of humor they have to a large extent departed." This was written at a time when comics were considered more adult fare than for children.

Whatever their worth, comic books seem to be surviving well in a mass media culture.

No longer a 10-cent bargain, (most are now 12 to 15 cents) they still have a quality that television does not have, the ability to retain the printed word to return and savor whenever the mind needs stimulating.

The World's Greatest Thrills

SEARING SERIAL ACTION!

Thrill-filled exploits of those daring saddle-pals, the fabulous James boys!

Adventures of FRANK and JESSE JAMES
A 12-RELEASE
A REPUBLIC SERIAL IN 3 CHAPTERS

featuring
CLAYTON MOORE
STEVE DARRELL
WILL NEILL
GEORGE J. LEWIS

Directed by
Fred Brannon and Yakima Canutt

Original Screen Play by Franklin Adams, Basil Deaky, Sol Shaw

VICTORY PICTURES
SAM NAYZMAN
presents

BLAKE OF SCOTLAND YARD

featuring
RALPH BYRD
HERBERT RAWLINSON
JOAN BARCLAY
LEO RICHES

Directed by
BOB HILL

12 CHAPTERS

EXCLUSIVE!

"BRING BACK THE MATINEE SERIALS"

—PART 1

By Carlson Wade

ACTION...THRILLS...CHILLS!!!

The trapeze rope, breaking above the lions' cage the most breath-taking carnival you've ever seen!

KING OF THE CARNIVAL

featuring
HARRY LAUTER
FRAN BENNETT - KEITH RICHARDS - ROBERT SHAYNE

A REPUBLIC SERIAL IN 12 CHAPTERS
REPUBLIC PICTURES CORPORATION HERBERT A. MAYER, President

SEE the deadly trap all set this time going off the last time

SEE the deadly back-thruster where men never die!

SEE the amazing train...the fight to the death on the railroad tracks!

ATOM MAN vs. SUPERMAN

Based on the SUPERMAN character feature appearing in SUPERMAN and ACTION COMICS magazines and in daily and Sunday newspaper comic strips. Adapted from the SUPERMAN radio program.

SUPERMAN KIRK AUSTIN, JEFFE TINKER, BOB BROWN, LARRY JONES, and others

Directed by THOMAS HENRY

"A FIEND MENACES A CITY'S THOUSANDS... with a problem too big for the police. But, three dauntless stuntmen from a circus turn detectives to show the mysterious 39013 some new tricks." **BLAZING BULLETS WRITE A STIRRING PAGE IN AMERICA'S HEROIC HISTORY!** Watch the greatest Indian fighter of them all."

"**HIGH WIRE THRILLS!** See the trapeze snap while the hungry lions are waiting below. See the deadly knife-thrower whose aim never misses. See the booby trap set...the dynamite going off too soon."

"**SABOTAGE ON THE HIGH SEAS.** A thrill voyage with Trader Tom of the China Seas. Action and suspense as the United Nations strikes out at an unseen enemy!"

You have just read a few of the blood-curdling announcements that sent the young and the still-young-in-spirit to the local movie house. Here they would line up before the box office, waiting for it to open so they could plunk down the quarter price of admission (some of you may remember when it cost a thin dime) and enjoy about forty-five minutes of thrills and chills of the latest Saturday matinee serial. Yes...the world's greatest thrills could be found in the by-gone Saturday matinee serial that kept you coming back again and again to see how the hero or heroine escaped death and destruction.

Each installment ended in a breathtaking disaster, one that would surely spell doom for your favourite All-American hero. How could he possibly escape the forces of evil in the person of explosives, natural disasters, earthquakes, tidal waves, an avalanche, thundering hooves, flames as well as a mild fall from a mountain top? As the episode ended, you



were just about certain your hero had met his doom at the hands of the arch enemy or enemies.

The screen flashed an announcement to come back to the theatre the next Saturday matinee to see the next episode of this thrilling, exciting, danger-packed serial and learn whether or not your hero managed to escape the forces of evil.

This bait was dangled before you for at least 12 weeks (most serials ran for 12 episodes and

a few were extended to 15 breathtaking episodes) and each time you arrived at the theatre with bated breath and pounding heart, waiting to see how your hero escaped his doom. And each time you left the theatre, filled with the same suspense and counting the days when you could return to the same theatre and watch your hero "return from the dead," so to speak.

It never failed.

Perhaps it was this dream illusion that made the serials

of yore so popular that today; we still long for the good old days, because television has naught of the appeal of these episodic serials. Television has a modicum of entertaining value but the excitement, the suspense, the danger, the identification with the rugged hero is easily melted away by a station break offering you a candy bar or cigarette or beer, thereby spoiling the entire mood. Furthermore, sitting in the comfort of your home, surrounded by security, you can scarcely expect to feel a close kinship with a daredevil hero in the wilds of the jungles who is surrounded by cannibals and man-eating animals, or a circus trapeze star who faces certain death as his lines snap, or a China Seas trader who battles an opium smuggling ring on board a shaký ship. Seated in your living room, you have to force yourself into a mood of suspense and danger.

But seated in a darkened theatre, the outside world and the security of your home have all vanished away. For a breathless 45 or even 60 minute period, you will lose yourself in the adventures of your favourite serial hero. It was worth the long queue and the push and shove to get a good seat, wasn't it?

What made the serials so great? The action and suspense that *never* relented. Every minute was filled with danger, distress, adventure. Each episode of the serial bore its eye-catching title.

For example, let's look at *Daredevils of the Red Circle*, a Republic serial in 12 daring chapters that starred Charles Quigley, Herman Brix, David Sharpe and Carole Landis. Their names may be familiar to you. I might add that some serial stars went on to great fame and glory in motion picture filmdom. But the majority



RUGGED ACTION STAR
Harry Lauter and Keith Richards in one of the many exciting scenes from "King of the Carnival," spine-tingling serial thriller from Republic Studios.



EXCITING SCENE from Republic's spine-tingling new serial, "King of the Carnival," pictures co-stars Harry Lauter and Fran Bennett.

of them remained loyal to serials and their millions of fans and perhaps carved for themselves a more hallowed niche in the hearts and minds of those who loved this Saturday-matinee masterpiece of film making.

In *Daredevils*, some of the titles of the episodes will start your heart pounding and your memories stirring. For instance, we have *The Monstrous Plot*, *The Executioner*, *Flight To Doom*, to help whet your appetite.

The theme is exciting even though simple. (Who wants to delve into Freudian motivation? You just want good entertainment!) Convict 39013 has served 15 years in prison; now he returns to his home town and vows to avenge him-



Charles Quigley, Miles Mander, Carole Landis, Herman Brix and David Sharpe in Republic's Serial, "Daredevils of the Red Circle."

selt against his ex-partner Granville who saw to it that he, 39013 (no other name is given to the villain) was arrested and convicted for embezzling. The villain kidnaps and imprisons Granville, assumes his identity and sets out to destroy everything related to Granville Enterprises.

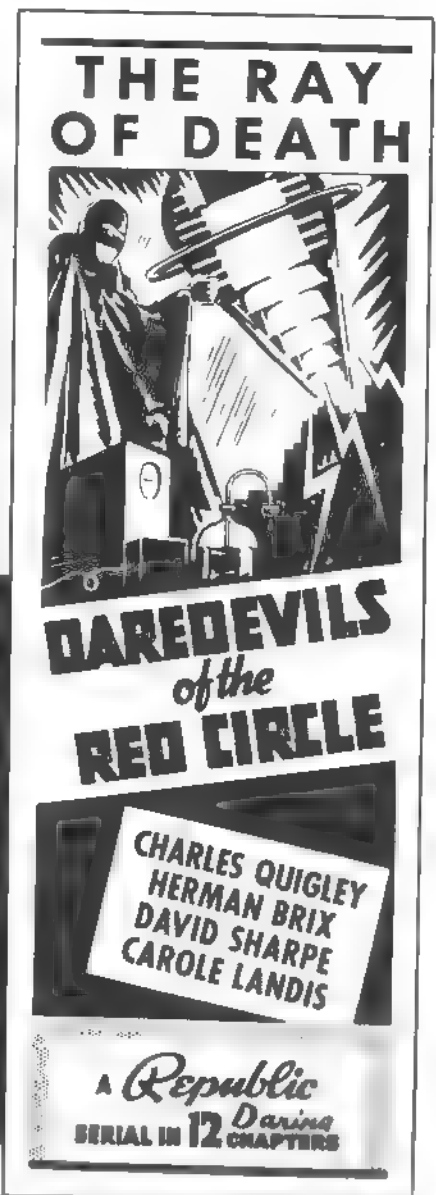
Meanwhile (we're still in the first chapter, mind you!) in the same town, three college athletes known as The Daredevils of the Red Circle, work for Granville Enterprises. On the amusement pier, to be specific. The pier is destroyed by 39013 and with it perishes one Daredevil's kid brother. His older brother, Gene, vows to avenge his death, joins with Granville's grand-daughter, Blanche. But just as they join forces, they find themselves trapped in a collapsing tunnel under the water. At this precise moment, the episode ends and you are invited to come back to the theatre the following Saturday matinee to see *if* the heroes escape.



Herman Brix and Charles Quigley in "Daredevils of the Red Circle." A Republic Serial.

As always, the episode ends with this cliff-hanger. Danger and sure destruction faces the heroes. So...let's peek on Episode 2. You will recall that everyone was trapped under the water in a collapsing tunnel. How do they escape? Simple... Episode 2 opens with a brief flashback showing how our heroes got into their mess—and miracle of miracles—they escape when Gene is able to close a large steel bulk-head in the path of the oncoming wave and all lives are saved.

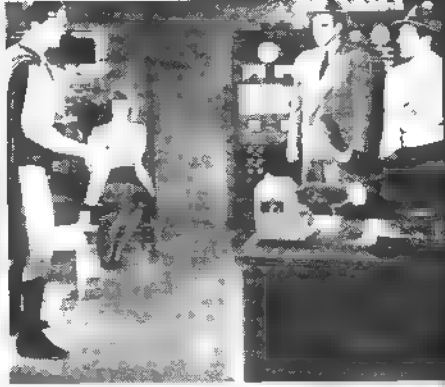
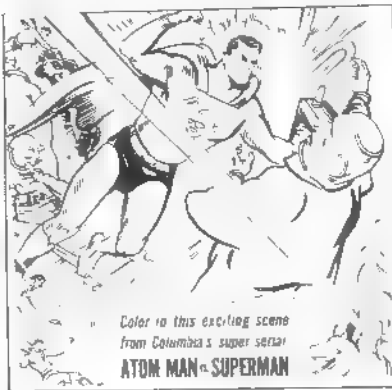
Each episode was self-contained in that it featured the



hero against the villain in a specific danger-packed battle. Each episode had the hero in the throes of sure disaster. That was how it ended.

As we follow the Daredevils, we see that one of them falls into a flaming chemical tank as the episode ends. *Zowie!* He's finished for sure. Oh, yeh? Next episode, we discover that he is rescued when his buddies extinguish the flames with a powerful fire-fighting device.

In another episode, the arch fiend 39013 turns on a lethal gas through a garage sprinkling system, trapping the Daredevils. There is no escape. How can they escape the deadly fumes? They gasp, sputter,



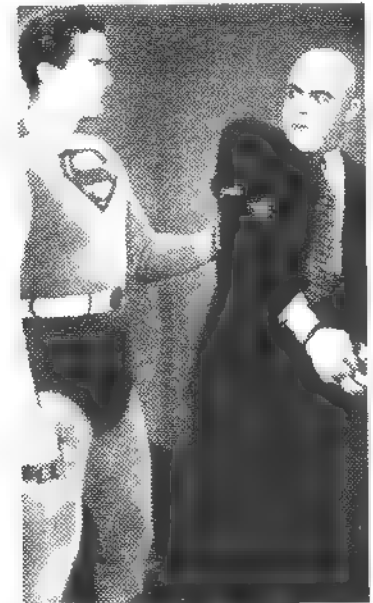
fall down as they're overcome by the fumes, trapped in the locked (from the outside) garage. Next week, you learn that one Daredevil rouses up, gets into a big sedan in the garage, crashes through the heavy garage doors. Now, they make a merry chase as they try to capture 39013.

The old-time serial always had its series of explosions such as being blown up in a boiler explosion...the hero escapes a moment before the actual explosion by discovering a relief-valve. A bomb is thrown into a room in which the hero is imprisoned. The bomb explodes. Next week, much to your relief, you discover that the boys had seized the bomb a moment before it exploded, hurled it through the window just in the nick of time.

Sometimes, the hero would climb up a ladder but the villain would tip it over, push it over backwards so that the he-

ro would fall into a vat of gas that was threatened to be ignited. The hero seizes a railing and the ladder is prevented from overturning entirely. He is saved. (Isn't he always? You may have known, down deep, that he would make it but you preferred to live in a dream. Today, most of us have lost our imagination. The world *is* too much with us, sad but true.)

The final episode meant a face-to-face battle between hero and villain. Who would win? In Daredevils, a final episode is fraught with excitement as 39013 gives the hero a wild chase; there are car crashes, bombs exploding, a race through the woods and even a kidnapping. But 39013 is not going to escape. Somehow he is in a car with an unexploded bomb that is trigger-sensitive, so to speak. Terrified 39013 races off...alas, he should have known better than to speed because when he reaches 70, the villain and his



henchmen are blown to bits. Thus is the end to all tyrants. It took you 12 trips to the Saturday matinee to see the villain get his due rewards...and you had 12 marvelous excursions into a world of fantasy

"BRING BACK THE MATINEE SERIALS"—PART 1

(PREPRINTED)

(Continued from Page 51)

and exciting adventures.

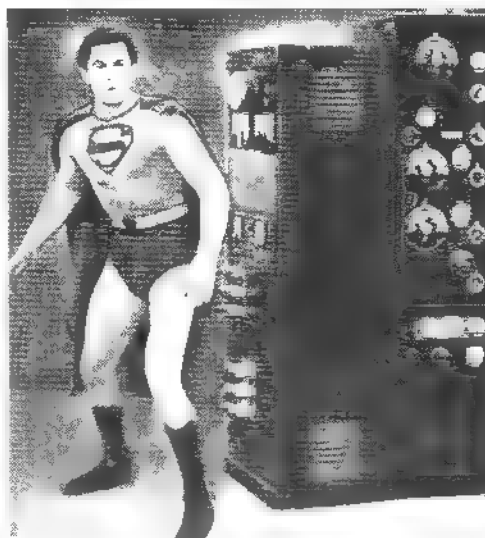
Westerns were popular, too. In *Overland with Kit Carson*, a Columbia serial in 15 chapters, we saw Bill Elliott, Iris Meredith, Richard Fiske and Bobby Clack battle outlaws and renegades in the wild... wild... wild west. And it was really wild. Get a load of these episodic titles: *Doomed Men*, *Fight for Life*, *Ride of Terror*, *Rendezvous With Death*, *Devil's Nest*, *Blazing Peril*, *Foiled* (what a great one word title!), *Crumbling Walls* and the conclusion: *Unmasked!*

Kit Carson is called into the rugged west to help end Pegleg's renegade reign of terror. Pegleg is not alone; he has recruited his cohorts in crime who are organized as the Black Raiders.

Kit Carson thereby starts risking death no less than 15 times does he face sure destruction and will definitely go to that happy prairie in the sky. In one episode, the Raiders send down huge boulders to avalanche Kit and his wagon train. Kit swerves just in time to escape (in the next chapter) but now the Raiders send a flaming cart to hit his ammunition wagon. A deafening explosion means certain death.

Kit escapes by just managing to be behind a huge protective boulder. But in another installment, he is aboard a runaway ammunition wagon that careens madly off a cliff. He escapes by jumping out in mid-air and falling upon a soft ledge.

Episode after episode is filled with explosions, stampedes, avalanches, being hurtled over a cliff. And always, Kit and his "good guys" fool the "bad guys" and cheat death by just managing to escape. A real clincher takes place when Pegleg traps Kit in a cave, shoots in bullets; one pierces a water tank, sending water



pouring into a cauldron of molten metal which explodes. The entire cave is sprayed with white hot liquid iron! Is our hero doomed?

Next week, we are relieved to note that he fell down on the ground, rolled beneath a natural indentation in the cave wall, and was mercifully spared. In the climax, Pegleg is unmasked (I should have told you that throughout 15 chapters, the true identity of Pegleg is unknown and this means you have more suspense because you're gripping the edge of your seat to know his real name.) and turns out to be a local trader who hoped to scare everyone into leaving so he could get the land for dirt cheap. This unmasked Pegleg battles Kit and meets his just fate by being trampled by his own horse.

King of the Carnival fea-



tured Harry Lauter, billed as the daredevil of the air. You travel with a circus crew, watch a cage of lions almost devour the hero, scream as trapeze ropes snap, explosives blowing up the entire circus, etc. Each time, our hero manages to escape by either rolling away, or else he awakens just as a railroad train is about to turn him into chopped meat and miracle of miracles, he rolls off the tracks. This particular serial was more than just a circus story of rivalry and jealousy but involved T-men, counterfeiters, smuggling, etc. There is also a runaway motorcycle hurtling over a cliff with our hero. Does he meet his end? Not quite. (We're only up to Episode Nine.) He lands in a mountain lake and swims safely to shore. In the end, the hero meets the villain, chases and battles him atop the acrobatic

DANGER RIDES THE WAVES

POWER PACKED SERIAL EXCITEMENT LOADED WITH THRILLS AND ADVENTURE!

TRADER TOM of the CHINA SEAS

FEATURING HARRY LAUTER • ALINE TOWNE
JULE TALBOT • ROBERT SHAYNE • FRED GRAHAM
WRITTEN BY RONALD DAVIDSON
A REPUBLIC SERIAL IN 12 CHAPTERS
A PUBLICITY UNIT • EPISODE 10 • MONDAY 10:15 P.M. EST



bars of the tent. There is a struggle and the villain loses his grip, falls to his death.

Atom Man Vs. Superman put our comic hero to life, on the screen in the person of Kirk Alyn. He battles Atom Man, saves Lois who is hurtling down a ledge by flying down and catching her. He saves Jimmy, the news boy, from being blown to bits a moment before the car in which he is imprisoned is completely shattered. And so, Superman braves deadly rays, noxious vapors, boiling torrents, etc. He not only saves himself but his friends as well so this adds to the thrill of it all.

Take a trip to the Orient in the person of *Trader Tom of the China Seas*. The mysterious Far East will captivate you. Much action takes place on a ship and is complete with the usual explosions, landslides, flames, underwater diving in which an air line is cut and our hero, Tom, is left drowning in the briny deep. (Okay... if you wonder how he escapes, the next chapter has him freeing himself of his useless helmet and he swims to safety.) We have the evil Khan, hostile natives and smugglers in Burma-

tra, underwater battles, etc.

In Episode 12, peace is restored to the world by Trader Tom as he and the foreign agents fight in a rickety house that soon goes up in smoke... Trader Tom has escaped but not the agents.

Serials could take place in the west (for example, *Adventures of Frank and Jesse James*) or in Scotland Yard (remember *Black of Scotland Yard* and the evil Scorpion and that sequence in which they battle in the Paris sewers?) or on a remote planet such as *Radar Men From The Moon* featuring Commando Cody the sky Marshal of the Universe; there was also *Government Agents vs. Phantom Legion* and variations of westerns such as *Man*



With The Steel Whip (Meet El Latigo, dangerous as the steel whip coiled in his hands... pitted against a gigantic boulder, rushing to meet almost certain death) and *Son of Geronimo*, *Apache Avenger* (watch a barbaric battle, thrills in a flaming struggle to the death!) and the time-honored favourite, *Adventures of Captain Kidd*, king of pirates. Of course, there was also *Batman* who could move like a flash, ride like the wind, punch like a battering ram.

What made serials so great? You could believe them! You took them seriously and you had a wonderful time. For a thin dime or a quarter, you could lose yourself in a happy world of imagination and when you left the theatre, you felt just great! How do you feel when you leave today's theatre?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

HALL OF SHAME

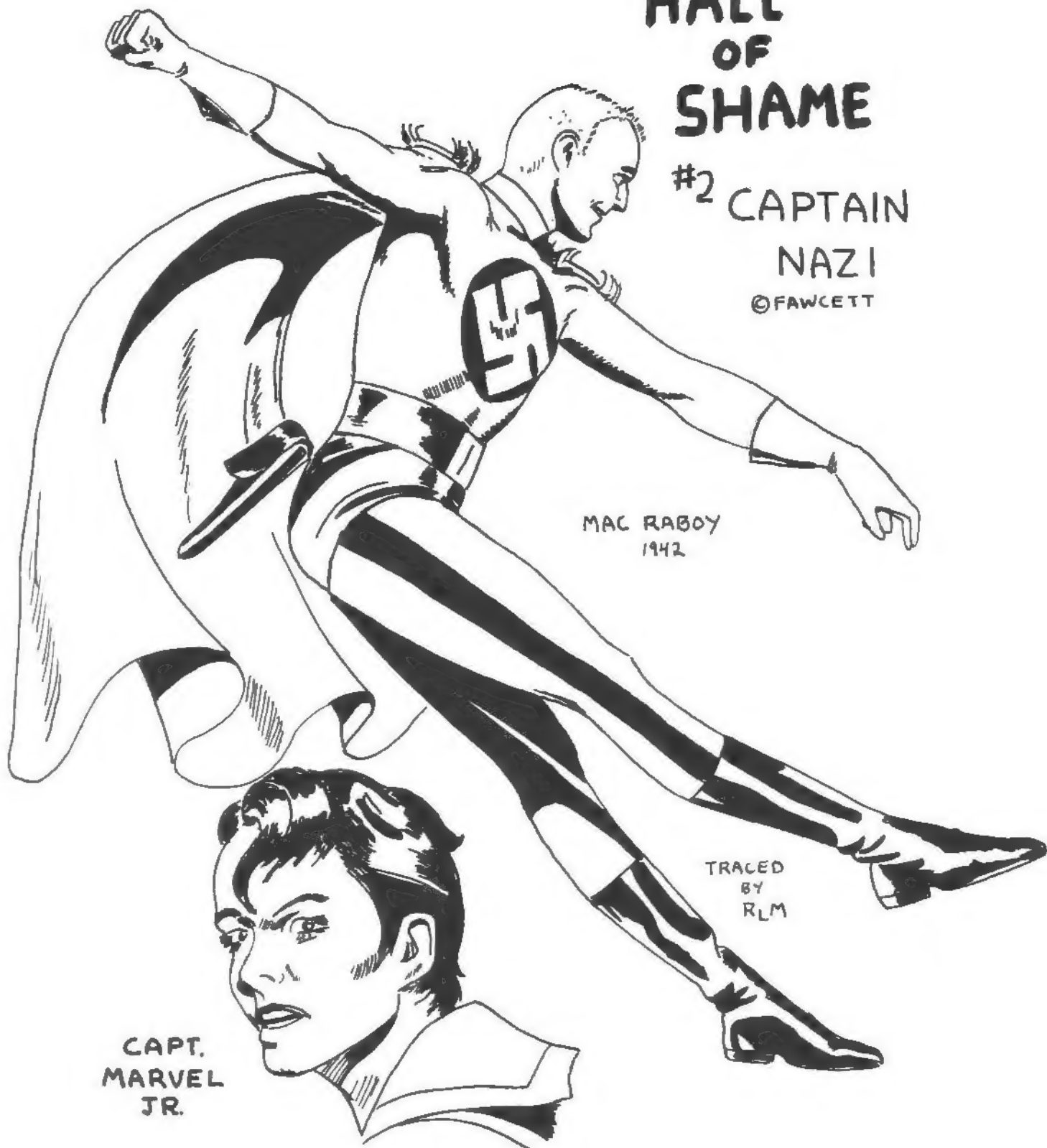
#2 CAPTAIN
NAZI

©FAWCETT

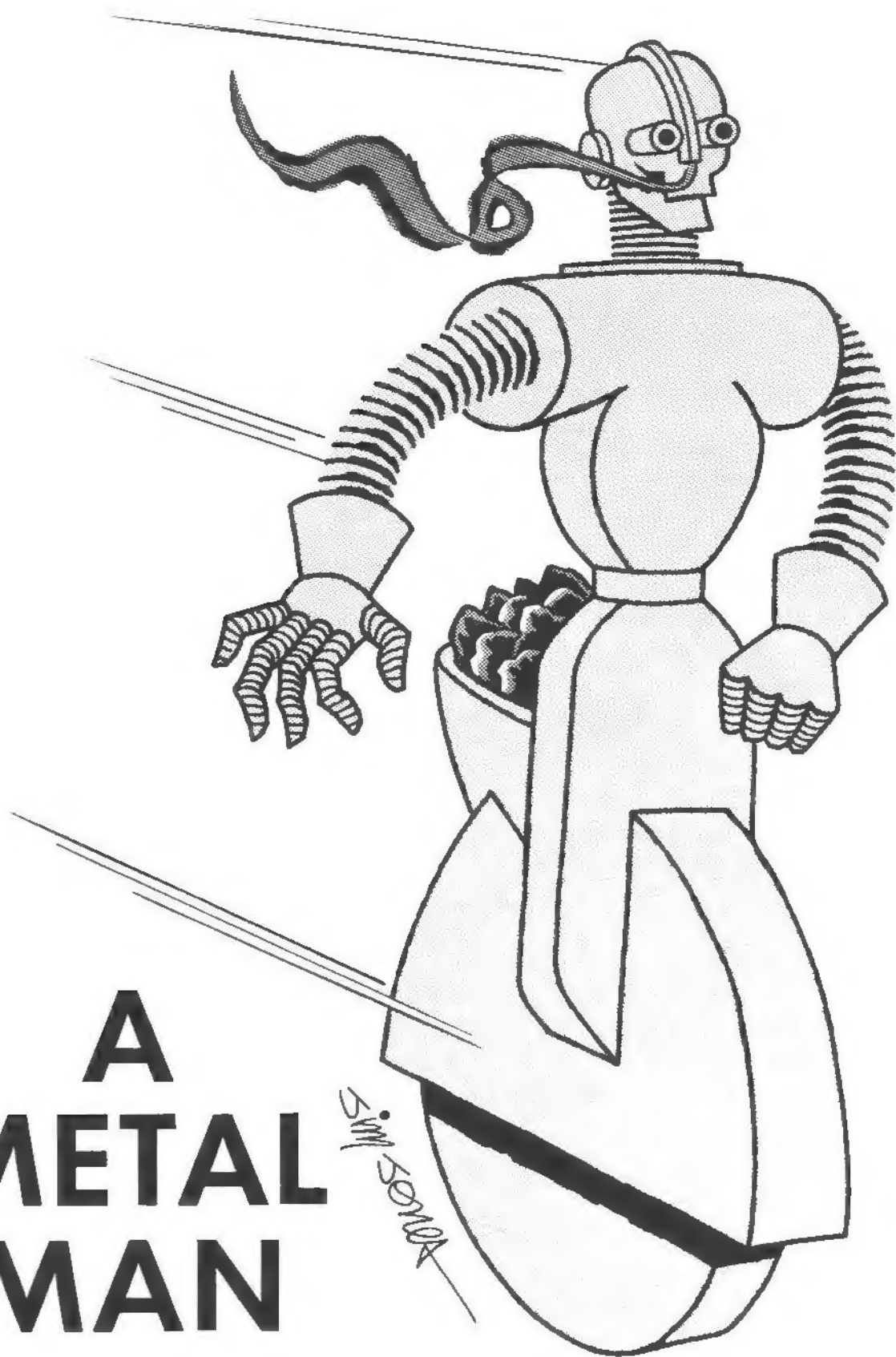
MAC RABOY
1942

TRACED
BY
RLM

CAPT.
MARVEL
JR.



A METAL MAN



Now, this all happened a very long time ago...way back in the 30's. This was before I even started to go to school. Every evening I'd wait for my Dad to come home from work. While waiting for dinner, Dad would lay on the living room couch and read the paper. I'd hop up on the couch and crawl to the inside so I couldn't roll off the couch's edge. The dialogue was always the same. It was sort of a game we'd play. Always Dad would say, "And what can I do for you Jim?" "Aw-w-w come on, you know, Dad. Read me the funnies!"

Turning to the comic-page Dad would read all my favorites. There were many more than these but MICKEY MOUSE, KRAZY KAT, BARNEY GOOGLE, and HENRY are the only ones I can remember. It was a real treat to have my Dad read and explain the comics to me every evening!

However, the BIGGEST TREAT came on Sunday mornings. Dad would go to the drug-store and bring back BOTH the Los Angeles Sunday papers. Then, spreading out the comic-sections on the living room rug, he would read them to me.

These were REALLY COMICS! Just about every strip was FULL-PAGE! Perhaps, 15% of them were half-page. In those days, the comics were the BIG entertainment feature. In many cases, the comics SOLD the Sunday paper. Sure, there were ads but the ads had to fit into the comic-section. The comics weren't squeezed or REDUCED in size to make room for the ads as they are today.

Dad didn't read all the comics to me, just the ones he thought I'd like. He ALWAYS picked the ones that became my favorites. My two BIG favorites were Alex Raymond's FLASH GORDON and TARZAN as drawn by Hal Foster.

Up to this time, I hadn't cared too much for MANDRAKE THE MAGICIAN. This changed in 1936. A story that was to run for 28 Sundays started. Dad figured I might enjoy it and read it to me. The story line was science-fiction and similar to the FLASH GORDON plots. GREAT!!! The Phil Davis art was VERY GOOD! It had the same illustrative feeling to it that was found in Alex Raymond's work of the same period.

This was the FIRST time I ever saw a robot--A METAL MAN! To me, it was FASCINATING! Since that time, this metal man has been my all-time favorite! Here is the actual dialogue from the comic-strip. It best describes what seemed to be a wheeled automaton.

In a brief, fleeting fraction of a second Mandrake's fantastic mind completely analyzed the functional and operational processes of the weird machine-man that was rolling toward them!

He whispered to Lothar, "A man of the "X" DIMENSION! Uncanny! He seems to be made of LIVING, ANIMATED metal--instead of flesh. Those wheels are part of him."

"Him is machine--like auto!" exclaimed Lothar.

"No, Lothar--a man! In our world, wheels do not exist in nature, they are man-made! Here, nature has created wheels and living metal!"

These living metal men of the "X" DIMENSION ate coal and drank oil in various forms of refinement. They carried a supply of coal in a hopper, so they might have a "snack" at any time.

Like all the FLASH GORDON stories, this MANDRAKE adventure contained many strange "MEN"!!! There were the METAL MEN, TREE MEN, CRYSTAL MEN, and MEN MEN! The latter were FLESH MEN. These creatures were identical to earth men. Also, making a brief appearance was a FIREBIRD! This was a bird of LIVING FLAME whose body and wings were composed entirely of ANIMATED coal! The FIREBIRD was the size of a two-engined, DC-2 transport plane!

And so, it turns out that this METAL MAN was a metal man and not a robot as my faulty memory had remembered. However, I'll continue to think of him as one. This wheeled man of the "X" DIMENSION was and IS my all-time, ALL-TIME favorite--METAL MAN!!!

Jim Jones

KEY TO BACK COVER

Starting at the top and reading from left to right:

SKYMAN	AIRBOY	BULLETMAN	TARGET	SPY SMASHER
CAT MAN	DAREDEVIL	CAPT. MARVEL	BLACK TERROR	

The Great COMING IN THE SKY

AND DID I
EVER TELL YOU
ABOUT THE
TIME.....?

NEWTON